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CHRIST
A COVERT FROM THE TEMPEST.

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In the person of our Redeemer, who is very man as well as God, is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, that "A MAN *shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.*" Isa. xxxii, 2.

In a serene day, when no wind is up, when no rain is falling, a man may see by the wayside a shelving rock and may pass by it without emotion. Not so the weary traveller who is fleeing before the rising storm or the beating tempest.

In a season of rain, or in a land of waters, one may pass by a river with little interest. Not so a traveller in the Arabian deserts, surrounded with burning sands, fainting with heat, and parched with thirst. The sight of a stream of water, and especially of "rivers of water," in such a place, would transport him.

In a country covered with wood or pinched with cold, a huge rock might offer its shade unwelcome; but amidst the parched wastes of Arabia, where the weary traveller, exposed all day to the intense heat of a vertical sun, sees not a tree nor a shrub, but only one boundless waste of burning sand—*there* a cool retreat beneath the shade of an over-hanging cliff—*there* "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land," would be most welcome.

These observations suggest a principal reason why the Saviour of the world, whose very name ought to be music to every human ear, is treated with such cruel indifference by the greater part of mankind. It is because they do not feel their guilt, and misery, and need of a Saviour. They are blind to the infinite majesty, and holiness, and loveliness of God, and to the immense obligations by which they are bound to him; and therefore they do not see the infinite guilt of rebelling against all his commands, all his mercies, all his glories and

interests; and therefore they are not pressed down under a sense of their awful condemnation and ruin. Hell is not laid open before them as their proper punishment. They do not stand amazed at the patience which has kept them out of it so long. They do not see themselves to be utterly ruined, and utterly helpless and hopeless without a Saviour. And therefore his precious gospel, which ought to fill the world with wonder and delight, with gratitude and praise, is cast aside as an idle tale, and the name of Jesus is treated with the most dreadful indifference.

But let a man be thoroughly convicted of sin; let him see himself covered with pollution from the head to the foot; let him stand in sight of the eternal judgment, and apprehend that divine justice has no choice but to crush him into everlasting torment; let him see himself just about to receive the descending wrath of God with the weight of a thousand worlds; and in that awful moment let him obtain a glimpse of Jesus, who came to "save his people from their sins;" let him lift his trembling eye to a God reconciled in Christ and smiling upon him: I ask that man, "What" now "think you of Christ?" "O," says he—but language fails. A sacred reverence settles upon his countenance; his uplifted eye speaks unutterable things. I see it glisten, I see it weep. "O," says he. His hands are clenched and forcibly raised to his breast. The opening of the last judgment could not add solemnity to a single feature. "O, the height and the depth, the length and the breadth of the love of Christ! Where has this glorious mystery lain hid, that I have never seen it before?" To such an eye, how precious does the Saviour appear as the great medium through which the love of God has come down to men—as the Word by which all the wonders of the eternal Mind are expressed—as the great Prophet who has brought down all the instructions that have blessed the world from the days of Eden—as the Priest whose atonement and intercession have astonished heaven and earth—as the King who has governed the world from the beginning, and has always protected and provided for his people, and has all their interests in his hands, and all the treasures of the universe to impart.

To one who is indifferent to the blessedness of com-

munion with God and of conformity to him, there appears no form or comeliness in Christ why he should desire him. But to one who feels an insatiable eagerness to rise from this dark world to a knowledge of all the grand and interesting things which are taking place in the kingdom of God—who longs to be united to all holy beings, and to share in their immortal friendship and blessedness and honors—who has no desires so great as to be good and conformed to the God he loves; to such a one Jesus must appear exceedingly precious as the one appointed to open the universe to view, to pour all its light upon the eye, and to exalt the soul to all its purity, to all its dignity, to all its happiness.

To an anxious and afflicted soul, the Saviour appears peculiarly interesting in the light in which he is exhibited by the prophet. In the charming simplicity of Eastern figure, he is presented "*as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.*" Here are three separate figures, very striking to an Eastern ear, which admit of distinct illustrations.

"A hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest." This is but one figure; for the latter clause, as is common in Eastern poetry, is only the echo of the former, presenting a hiding-place and covert from the windy storm and tempest.

Jesus is found to be the best hiding-place and covert from the winds and tempests of *affliction*. A poor, disconsolate soul, after it has been chased through the world by the frowns of pursuing fortune—after it has been hunted from place to place, and not suffered to rest in any corner of creation—will find in Christ that protection and repose which all other places denied it. The weather-beaten wretch, after bearing the storms of this inclement world through the long night of affliction, may find in him a shelter under which he may hear the tempest howl without and feel it not.

Jesus is the best hiding-place and covert from the tempest of an *agitated conscience*. When the lightning of conviction flashes upon the soul, and guilt with its thundering voice spreads its dark folds over the mind, nowhere but in Jesus can be found a covert from the bursting storm. To what other refuge can a sinner fly

when the horrid nature of his rebellion is laid open before him? At what time his ingratitude to the God that made, redeemed, and preserves him appears; at what time he is terrified and confounded by the frequent repetition of his sins and the obstinacy of his corruptions; at what time guilt superadded to guilt, rolls its dark wreaths over the soul, like clouds that "return after the rain," nowhere but in Jesus can he find a refuge from the gathering tempest. The blood of Christ, sprinkling his conscience from dead works, has a wonderful power to relieve from the pangs of conscious guilt. It is the most sovereign balm to a wounded spirit. "Give me Jesus or I die," cries the agonized soul. "None but Christ, none but Christ. Take away that cloud that I may see him, and I shall live." What other refuge *can* a soul find that is racked with guilt? Let him go to his wealth, his honors, his pleasures; they are all unsavory ashes in the mouth of a man dying with hunger. Let him go to philosophy; it is a stranger to his case, and knows nothing either of his griefs or his wants. Let him go to speculative divinity; it is no physician, but only a corpse laid by the side of a dying man. Let him go to the courts of the Lord—let him go to his Bible, to his knees, and all without Christ are nothing. Let him go to God, and God out of Christ "is a consuming fire." But let him only come in sight of Jesus, and get near enough to "touch" if it be but "the hem of his garment," and all his pains are instantly relieved—the fire in his conscience is quenched, and he is as much at ease as though he never felt a pain.

Jesus is also the best covert from the tempest of *fear* when it agitates the soul. There is a material difference between conscious guilt and the apprehension of punishment, although, like light and heat, they generally go together. I see a sinner convulsed with the fear of a judgment to come. With an eye wildly rolling and marked with horror, I hear him cry, "Who can dwell with devouring fire? who can inhabit everlasting burnings?" His anxious eye looks above and beneath, and searches creation through, but not a ray of hope can it find—nothing but clouds, and darkness, and tempests. At length it falls on Jesus. Instantly the heavens are

calm; the sound of the distant storm dies upon his soothed ear, and every care is still.

Jesus is the only hiding-place from the tempest of *divine wrath*. A rock of adamant, he stood and suffered this storm to spend its force on him; while his people, enclosed "in him," lay hid from the beating tempest. The storm is past, and now their faith looks abroad and sees an unclouded sky, and all nature smiling in fresher beauties than though no storm had been.

To finish the illustration of this figure, Jesus is the only hiding-place from the storms and tempests which *for ever beat upon the regions of the damned*. Not to *them* is he a covert. They rejected the canopy of his grace when he would willingly have spread it over them; and now he is nothing to them. But to his own dear people, he will be a covert from the eternal storm

He shall be "*as rivers of water in a dry place*." The most obvious idea on the face of this figure is, that Jesus conveys *satisfaction* and *refreshment* to those who can find them nowhere else. There is a thirst for happiness in the soul of man, but there is a drought in all things but in God; and for *human* souls, a drought in all things but in the God that shines "in the face of Jesus Christ." Such is the constitution of things, that no man can find satisfaction but in the Christ of God. Nor will any ever find it there but those who despair of finding it anywhere else. But "when the *poor* and *needy* seek water and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them: I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water."

When one has ranged creation through in search of happiness—has sought it in the field and in the city, in the haunts of business and in the circles of pleasure, and has met with nothing but disappointment and rebuffs; when he has wandered restless from scene to scene, from employment to employment, perhaps from country to country; when, a pilgrim in the deserts of life, he finds himself "in a dry and thirsty land where no water is," and faints to think that happiness is no-

where to be found; then the gospel meets him and thus accosts him: Wherefore seekest thou "the living among the dead?" It is not here. Return from thine idle pursuit. There is but one point whence refreshment can come. Lift thine eyes to the Saviour of sinners He lifts his eyes; he lifts his heart; and finds "waters" breaking out "in the wilderness—and streams in the desert." Ah, says he, this is where I should have come before. It would have saved me many sore disappointments and many years of anguish.

When one is plucked and crushed by the hand of adversity—has found nothing but grief and perplexity in his connection with the world—carries the aching wounds where friends that have been torn away once grew to his heart—mourns alone without father or mother, without brother or sister, without wife or child —unpitied by the crowd of strangers that gaze upon him and pass him by—while his tattered garments remind him of better days; I hasten to the turf where he sits weeping, and gently, lest I should alarm the ear of grief, say to him, "Hath no man pitied thee?" "Ah," says he, "I am 'in a dry and thirsty land where no water is;' no satisfaction or refreshment for a wretch crushed beneath misfortune." "From my soul I pity you, but do not despair. Let me lead you to the mourner's Friend." I bring him to Jesus: and when I see the balm applied to his wounds, and the countenance of the sufferer beginning to brighten, I take my leave, and return to my house with delicious sensations that an infidel never knew.

Here is another pressed under a sense of heavy guilt. He also is in a land where no water is. He has sought on all sides for relief, but sought in vain. His thirst is for reconciliation with God. In quest of this he has applied to external reformation, to outward duties, to the means of grace. He has sought the counsel of ministers and Christians, and has tried to repose on the good opinions of others. He has made the desperate attempt to rest on universalism, and even on infidelity; but all to no purpose. The fever of his mind remains. His thirst for pardon and peace is unabated; but nowhere can he find anything to allay it, till at last he approaches

the gospel. He hears it say, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." His attention is strongly arrested. He examines the passage. It is the voice of the Saviour himself. He ultimately seizes the invitation and goes to him, and his astonished soul finds this way of salvation exactly suited to his wants. He finds within "him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

The last figure employed by the prophet, though appropriate and striking, conveys no meaning materially different from the other two. The idea is that of *rest in a cool and refreshing place.* "As the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." The figure represents a traveller in one of the Eastern deserts, burnt with intense heat, worn out with toil, fainting for water, for shade. His resolution and strength fail. He abandons the hope of ever reaching the end of the desert; when all at once he discovers before him a high impending rock, under the cavity of whose side he finds a refreshing shelter from the scorching sun and burning sand. Such a retreat does our dear Redeemer afford to those who are fainting under the labors and discouragements of this wearisome life. This vale of tears may well be called a weary land. There are many in it who are ready to faint under the load of affliction, and can say with Job, "My soul is weary of my life." Many are weary of sin—wearied out with a long course of painful struggles with the world, the flesh, and the devil—are often discouraged with the greatness of the contest, and sink under the apprehension that they shall never get through with safety. These evils press them so hard that they often sigh for the grave where the weary are at rest. But a nearer and more delightful retreat is to be found in him who says, "The Lord hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." "I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul." When his Church wandered forty years in the Arabian wilderness, among burning sands, without a shelter or a shade, he covered them by day with a pillar of cloud. What this was intended to signify, appears from the application made of it by the prophet: "The

Lord shall create upon every dwelling-place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for upon all the glory shall be a *defence.* And there shall be a tabernacle *for a shadow in the daytime from the heat,* and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain."

At what time a poor, fainting soul, weary of affliction, weary of sin, weary of temptation, casts itself under the shadow of this rock, he feels a sensation of relief which nothing else can bring, and which none can fully describe.

My brethren, what everlasting thanks do we owe to God for providing such a refuge from the beating tempest—such rivers of refreshment in a dry and thirsty land. What *could* the weather-beaten pilgrim, what could the faint and weary traveller do without them in such a world as this? How greatly does this view tend to endear the Saviour to us. What new motives rush upon the mind to *abide in him,* that we may every hour enjoy a "hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest"—that we may constantly lie at the fountain of living waters, and feel the permanent shadow of a great rock in a weary land. Why do the people of God find so little relief from the distresses of life and the troubles of conscience, but because they abide no more in their everlasting refuge?

How surprising it is, that in a world where a covert from the tempest is so much needed, it is so much neglected, and that even by those who have often found it a shelter when every other refuge failed. Would it not be strange to see a person ready to die with heat and thirst by the very side of a cooling fountain, and by the shade of an overhanging rock? Yet a still greater wonder is witnessed here.

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